

AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

2004 Budget Cuts: Impact on the Disability Community

Massachusetts' Fiscal Year 2004 (FY04) budget, passed recently pledging "no new taxes," is slated to hit many people with disabilities hard. Despite many welcome overrides by the legislature of Governor Romney's devastating vetoes, FY04's numerous cuts are of great concern.

The Legislative (or "Conference Committee") budget for Fiscal Year 2004 (CC04) took effect on July 1 of this year. When the \$22.4 billion budget was delivered to the Governor, he issued 370 vetoes to it, which cut an additional \$201 million.

Half of this amount came at the expense of health and human services. FY04 was then sent back to the legislature for overrides, which are still being deliberated. Here's the "lowdown" on cuts to disability services (please note: the budget situation is still changing daily, and the figures here reflect what was happening at press time).

Gov. Romney vetoed \$1.08 million from the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, cutting \$950,000 from vocational rehabilitation, independent living and employment services. These vetoes were overridden, but \$131,000 for 'Turning 22' services (transitional help for young people with disabilities), are still on the block.

The Disabled Persons Protection Committee, already fragile from underfunding, was hit with a \$40,000 veto by the Governor, which has not been overridden.

Consumers who are blind or visually impaired were also hit hard. The Governor cut \$1.2 million from

The Mass. Commission for the Blind (MCB). \$213,000 for MCB administration still awaits legislative override. Gov. Romney's vetoes (totaling \$1.05 million) for community services, eligibility screening, and 'Turning 22' services for new and existing clients, were overturned by the legislature.



The Worcester Talking Book Library program was saved from elimination by the legislature, as well as administrative cuts to Ferguson Industries for the Blind. A \$15 Blind I.D. Card fee has been added. (These cards were formerly issued free of charge).

Gov. Romney also cut \$128,000 from the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's operational fund, which has since been overridden.

Funding for the Department of Mental Retardation rises \$23.6 million, but much of this money is earmarked to offset recent legal costs. The Conference Committee budget cut community-based residential programs, which will result in partial to complete loss of support for 1,400 people. Respite and family support services are cut by \$15.4 million. The Governor's DMR vetoes were especially harsh – over \$4.3 million more was earmarked for cuts, including \$577,000 from transportation (340 people to lose services in CC04), and operation of local and regional offices. These vetoes are still standing. Fortunately, the legislature overturned Gov. Romney's additional cuts to community-based DMR programs (\$903,000).

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(Budget Cuts continued)

DMR administrative funds, respite services, family support (167 families still affected), 'Turning 22' services, and facilities (mainly the Glavin Regional Center and the Fernald Developmental Center), were restored to the CC04 level (totaling \$2.8 million). Many disability advocates support the closing of these and other state institutions, in favor of community-based services.

The Department of Mental Health had its budget cut by \$14.2 million in CC04, including \$11 million in funding for adult inpatient services. The legislative plan cuts emergency services and a program serving the homeless mentally ill. Gov. Romney vetoed \$3 million more to inpatient facilities, which would have resulted in the closing of Worcester State Hospital (displacing 150 patients). This veto was overridden.

The CC04 budget threatens CommonHealth, a subdivision of MassHealth serving disabled children and adults. The administration will now have the power to redefine what a 'disability' is, and impose enrollment caps. Approximately 2,400 people are in danger of losing health insurance because of this. There was no gubernatorial veto.

Two important legal services slated for elimination by the Governor were rescued by the legislature through veto overrides: the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, which assists the poor and disabled was restored (\$7.6 million), but was still cut 16% by CC04. Small but crucial, the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee was also saved (\$36,500).

These cuts come on top of cuts enacted in recent years. The "optional benefits" cuts implemented in FY02 and FY03 (prosthetics, dental coverage, dentures, eyeglasses, and chiropractic service) are still in place. 10,000 legally-present immigrants will lose all health care coverage, as will 7,000 children enrolled in the Children's Medical Security Plan (due to increased premiums).

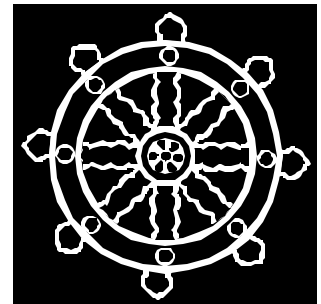
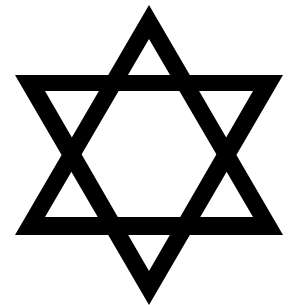
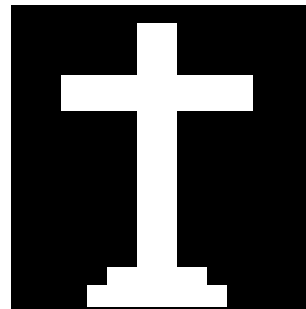
Raising taxes, or other means of raising revenue, could easily erase the deficit. But they have not been explored. (Although fees and surcharges, targeting the poorest incomes, are skyrocketing). But we are

not powerless. Legislators and the Governor are truly influenced by constituent calls - Here's how to contact them: Call the House switchboard at (617) 722-2000, or the Governor's Office at (617) 725-4005.

by Jonathan Dosick

Accessible Worship for All? Tell Us your Experience!

Was your local church, temple, meetinghouse or mosque built over 50 years ago, perhaps even 100 years ago? Are there members of your congregation and others you would like to invite who have disabilities and can't join in worship because of architectural or programmatic barriers there? Perhaps your congregation has indeed invested in physical or program accommodations to make sure that people with disabilities can participate fully in worship and fellowship of the congregation. You may have some valuable experience to share with other faith communities who are just beginning this journey!



The Commission for Persons with Disabilities would like to hear from anyone with information or questions about the accessibility of our religious congregations in the City of Cambridge. We are seeking good news as well as word about places

where work is yet to be done to achieve access for all. Cambridge has more than 90 Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith congregations. As spiritual homes to their many members, they proclaim the faith, aesthetics, and cultural and religious diversity of our City. Without better access, members of these faith communities who become disabled or have a child, partner/spouse or parent who is disabled find themselves left out or cut off from the very community and worship that has sustained and enriched their lives.

Removal of barriers goes beyond widening doors, building ramps or installing elevators. We know these items cost money and the historical significance of the building may need special consideration. But things like a good sound system and an order of worship done in **large print** may be what is most needed by many people. Often the greatest barriers that confront people with disabilities are the attitudes of non-disabled people that exclude, patronize or pity them.

These churches, synagogues and mosques also nurture our public life together and strengthen the community by opening their doors to a variety of human service and cultural programs. People who need the services provided by the non-profit organizations located in these religious buildings will find themselves denied

participation if they cannot get into the facility. The

Commission for Persons with Disabilities can provide technical assistance and be a resource to assist our diverse faith communities in making their programs and services more accessible to all people. Let us hear from you.



by Bet MacArthur and Carolyn Thompson

Free Computer Courses for People with Disabilities

The Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) Center for Careers and Lifelong Learning (CALL) is currently recruiting adults with disabilities for its A+ Certificate Training Course and its Microsoft Office Specialist Training Course. These courses teach students either skills in computer repair or office support and help them prepare for taking a Microsoft Certificate Test at designated Microsoft testing centers.



Classes begin on August 4, 2003 and meet Monday through Friday from 3:30p to

7:30p for 16 weeks here at our facility on 29 Winter Street in Downtown Crossing, Boston. Students will receive 10 weeks of basic computer instruction and 6 weeks of specialized instruction. Upon completion, students will work closely with our qualified employment specialists to find employment.

Eligibility: Applicants need to have a disability and currently unemployed. Students need to test at a minimum 9th grade reading and math skills, as well as score at least 50% on a Computer Aptitude Test.

To Apply: Please call Rebecca Pyle at 617-542-1993 x3204 (617-542-3992 fax) to set up an appointment to come in and fill out an application and test.

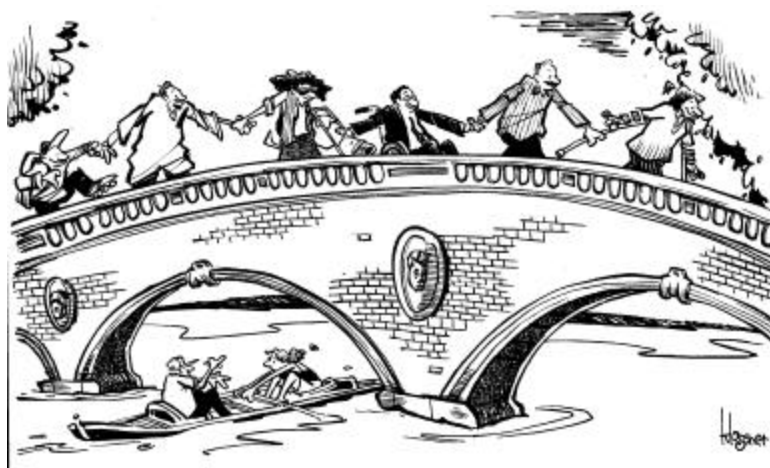
CALL has other computer job training courses for clerical positions in both general and medical office settings, accounting, a culinary arts program that includes English as a second language (ESL) and other ESL courses. For more information contact Geoff Vercauteren at 617-542-1993, x211 voice, 617-451-1496 TTY or gvercauteren@jvs-boston.org.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- August 4 **Building Unity through Inclusive Activities - Annual Color Day Event**, 10:30 – 1 at Rindge Field behind the Fitzgerald School. (RAIN DATE is August 7) Sponsored by Cambridge Community Schools, Childcare, Recreation, and Youth Programs and funded by the *Lead to Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities* (LOYD) grant.
- August 6 **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors** is a group for women that explores how to use art to heal past traumas. Meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street in Cambridge. Free, no experience necessary. For more information call the Center at 617-354-8807 or email: <info@cambridgewomenscenter.org.>
- August 6 **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- August 9 **"Lifestyles of the Poor and Unknown,"** a documentary film that shatters stereotypes about adults with cognitive disabilities, will be shown at 1 p.m. at the Boston Public Library at Copley Square in Rabb Auditorium. Independently produced/directed by Nancy Fleisler, it is part of the Women in Film and Video / New England SUMMERFEST. Screenings run from 9 am to 4 pm and include discussions with directors. "Inside the Hearts and Minds of a Developmentally Disable Couple" is the real-life story of Marni and Kris Jamison, married in 1993 and currently living, loving and working in New York City. It reveals contrasting, articulate, sometimes irreverent perspectives laced with a strong sense of humor that counter saccharine portrayals of people with developmental disabilities and raises questions about what "intelligence" really is. The viewing is FREE. Check <www.nansonaproductions.com> for more information about this Lifestyles project.
- August 9 **Introduction to Kayaking for individuals 18 and over in Marblehead Harbor.** Learn the basics about kayaks, equipment, and paddling strokes in the security of tandem boats. Practice doing a "wet exit" and navigate the harbor while learning about tides, weather and wind. Fee: \$50. For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org> This event will be offered again Sept. 6.
- August 10 **Sailing for teens 13-18 at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. Under the instruction of a skilled sailor and as part of a team, learn about rigging, knots, tacking and jibing. You will use state-of-the-art keelboats that combine stability with speed. Registration for this full day adventure is \$50. This program is offered again on Sept. 14. For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>.
- Aug.10-13 **Introduction to Camping at Nickerson State Park on the Cape** for individuals and families. Bring as much of your own equipment as you can, food for breakfast, lunch, snacks and one group dinner and stay for up to 3 nights. Participants are responsible for camp site fees. *All Out Adventures* will provide canoeing and kayaking and assist with camping and group dinners. For more information and to register call *All Out Adventures* at 413-527-8980. Also on Aug. 15 and 20.
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- August 12 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software that meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Go to their website at <<http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users>> and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- August 13 **Group Evening Paddle for adults on the Charles River in Boston.** For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>. Offered again on August 19 and 27.
- August 14 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2d floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- Aug.15-17 **Whitewater Rafting in Caratunk, Maine** for adults 18 and older. Outdoor Explorations (OE) works to challenge perceptions and change lives of people with and without disabilities through shared activities in the outdoors. This raft trip is accessible for people who use wheelchairs. The organization specifically designs its programs for people of all ages, with and without cognitive, sensory, physical, mental and multiple disabilities. Experience adventure, learn rafting basics and enjoy a journey down one of New England's premier whitewater rivers. Registration is \$200. For more information check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>, call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorex.org>.
- Aug.15-18 **Camping at Nickerson State Park on the Cape** for beginners, experienced campers and groups. Bring as much of your own equipment as you can, food for breakfast, lunch, snacks and one group dinner and stay for up to 3 nights. Participants are responsible for camp site fees. *All Out Adventures* will provide canoeing and kayaking and assist with camping and group dinners. For more information and to register call *All Out Adventures* at 413-527-8980. Also see August 20.
- August 19 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston. For more information contact Robert Snierston, Chair, <rsnierson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- August 19 **Group Evening Paddle for on the Charles River in Boston.** See Aug.13 listing for details.
- August 20 **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors** at the Women's Center. (See August 6 listing.)
- Aug.20-23 **Camping at Nickerson State Park on the Cape** for experienced individual and family campers. Bring as much of your own equipment as you can, food for breakfast, lunch, snacks and one group dinner and stay for up to 3 nights. Participants are responsible for camp site fees. *All Out Adventures* will provide canoeing and kayaking and assist with camping and group dinners. For more information and to register call *All Out Adventures* at 413-527-8980.
- August 23 **"The Producers" - a musical by Mel Brooks** at the Colonial Theatre, 106 Boylston Street in Boston, will be ASL interpreted for a Deaf and hard of hearing patrons and their companions at the 2 pm matinee performance this Saturday. Tickets are \$49.50 and must be ordered by August 13. Call TICKETMASTER at 800-943-4327 TTY or 800-347-0808 voice or visit the Box Office, Monday-Saturday 10-6 or Sundays 12-6.
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- August 27 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- August 27 **Group Evening Paddle for on the Charles River in Boston.** See Aug.13 listing for details.
- Sept. 3 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2 to 3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. (NO MEETING IN AUGUST) Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or <woman@braintrust.org> for more information.
- Sept. 6 **Introduction to Kayaking for adults at Marblehead – ASL interpreted** (See August 9 listing for details.)
- Sept. 7 **Ropes and Rocks** will challenge teens age 13-18 to develop skills as they master the climbing tower and work as a team to navigate the high ropes course. Equipment and adaptations make activities fully accessible. Takes place on the North Shore. Fee is \$150. For more information check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>, call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorex.org>.
- Sept. 11 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- Sept. 14 **Sailing for adults, 18 and older at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. Under the instruction of a skilled sailor and as part of a team, learn about rigging, knots, tacking and jibing. You will use state-of-the-art keelboats that combine stability with speed. Registration for this full day adventure is \$50. For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>.
- Sept. 17 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see Sept. 3 listing for details.)
- Sept. 20 **Introduction to Kayaking for teens 13-18 at Marblehead.** (See Aug. 9 listing for details.)



Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations. Examples of our ongoing work include:

- Work with various City departments to ensure **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) and related state and federal disability rights laws;
- Provide free **disability awareness training** upon request for any Cambridge business or nonprofit entity;
- Issue **temporary disability parking permits** to Cambridge residents;
- Cosponsor the **taxi discount coupon program** with the Cambridge Council on Aging; and
- Facilitate additional **accessible parking spaces** through the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD

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